

LONG ISLAND FORUM



Nassau's "Old" County Court House. From a Watercolor by Cyril A. Lewis. (See page 34)

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Editorials

The Misses Edna Pearsall and
Grace Mason
163 Bayview Ave.
Amityville, L.I., N.Y.

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Readers' Forum

The Man Called Rubber

Back during the early 1900's, at Long Beach, a white-haired chin-whiskered fancily attired gentleman made a visit to the Long Beach Life Saving Station. His clothes were somewhat unusual; a black swallow-tail coat, white stiff dress shirt, a cutaway vest but nary a necktie. He also wore a black, broad-brimmed hat, sort of Western style. Obviously not caring a snap for the dictates of fashion he wore one of his trouser legs at the proper full length but the other was cut off at the knee. He would arrive at the Station dragging along behind him on the ground some ten or twelve empty tin cans tied to his coattail by separate strings. A dog, sort of the hunting type, white with large brown spots, walked beside him. He did not ever tell his name, nor whence he came.

Our eccentric dresser brought with him a rubber cement for mending rubber boots which he maintained was his own invention. Since he wouldn't reveal his name the surfmen took to calling him "Rubber" and always welcomed him at the Station so they might have their cut or torn boots mended.

The surfmen let him stay at the Station and fed him and his dog. He disdained sleeping in a bed but just lay down beside the stove with his dog to rest.

Sometimes "Rubber" would stay at the Station for two or three weeks. On one visit he took Keeper Frank Langdon's boots and cut them at the knee in two places much to the Keeper's distress. The Keeper was a short man and sensitive. "Rubber" cut several inches off the tops of the bottom halves at the knee-ends and glued each two halves together again with his famous cement. When the cement dried he told two of the surfmen to hold onto opposite ends of the boots and pull with all their might. The boot-mending held

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The Queens Borough Public Library sells a complete index of the Long Island Forum for the years 1938-1947 inclusive, at \$1 postpaid. Also for the years 1948-1952 inclusive, at 50 cents postpaid. They may be obtained by writing to the Long Island Collection, Queens Borough Public Library, 89-14 Parsons Boulevard, Jamaica 32, New York.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS!

The other day we visited the Children's Library at Westbury where some twenty years ago we had the great pleasure of meeting that talented lady, the late Jacqueline Overton. Every so often we turn to her "Long Island's Story" which will always be a classic for the young and old.

In her chapter on "Colonial Life" she wrote about the way the Island's earliest settlers, the Dutch, received the annual visit of Santa Claus.

"Was not St. Nicholas the patron saint of the old Netherlands? So Long Island Dutch children on St. Nicholas Eve sang:

Sanctus Klaas, goedt heylightman," and snuggled down between featherbeds to dream of stockings full of goodies, while the grown folks ate 'Olycooks, pretzies, kiskatomas nuts and spitzenburgs with hot spiced Santa Cruz and good strong Christmas beer and cider."

We doubt whether you present day Long Islanders are prepared to undertake such courageous gastronomical adventures, but we hope there'll be plenty of turkey and cranberry sauce for all.

Merry Christmas!

NASSAU COUNTY'S 60th BIRTHDAY

One of the many contributions to the Island's History by the late Jesse Merritt, former Nassau County Historian, was a pamphlet, "The Historical Importance of Nassau County." Of the founding of Nassau County he wrote:

"In 1898 New York City planned to become Greater New York and to take in Brooklyn, part of Queens and Staten Island. The division of Queens was logical, for the towns of

Hempstead, North Hempstead, and Oyster Bay were rural in character. The western towns of Suffolk County were also dissatisfied at belonging to that county because they were so far distant from Riverhead, the county seat.

"Huntington, before its division to include Babylon, had long looked westward and in 1817 had asked to be incorporated into Queens County. Lloyd's Neck had been part of Oyster Bay until the Civil War. On January 22, 1898, a mass meeting gathered at Mineola to consider the formation of a new County. It was called to order by Halstead Scudder and elected as chairman, Benjamin D. Hicks, an influential citizen who had advocated such a county for thirty years

"Many names were suggested for the new shire, including Norfolk, Bryan, Matinecock, Sagamore and Nassau, the last by Archer B. Wallace, clerk of the mass meeting. The necessary bill was introduced in the Assembly by George B. Wallace, a well known lawyer, author and publisher. The bill became Chapter 588 of the Laws of 1898, creating Nassau County as of January 1, 1899."

Before we come to the end of this "Year of History" which has been so well celebrated throughout Long Island we think it proper to salute the great county of Nassau on its 60th birthday — this year. The cornerstone of the beautiful county Court House which is pictured on the cover of this issue was laid by one of its greatest citizens, the late Theodore Roosevelt whose 100th birth anniversary was celebrated only last year. His home at Oyster Bay became known throughout the world when it was a "Summer White House." He died exactly forty years ago to leave his country and his home island far the richer for his contributions.

The "Year of History" will itself be history in a few weeks. We, who believe in the importance of the preservation of the past for the sake of future guidance and for its own sake should indeed be grateful to those who worked so hard on their community celebrations. They gave tremendous impetus to the rising tide of interest in our heritage.

"When we encounter a natural style we are always astonished and delighted, for we expected to see an author, and found a man."

PASCAL

Continued from Page 222

up under this severe stress, and Keeper Langdon now had a pair to fit his short legs. In gratitude Keeper Langdon trimmed "Rubber's" hair and beard when it was needed. As an extra gesture "Rubber" made a punching bag for Lou Helmcke of the station crew that lasted for many years.

Sometimes the bootmender would walk west on the beach to sleep and cook his food at the key house used by the Life Savers at the end of their patrol to rest and get warm in cold weather. Here "Rubber" used a bench to sleep on and daytimes he would gather skimmer clams, frost fish, eels and other food cast up on the beach by the surf; vegetables, fruit and pieces of bacon. He used tallow candles also picked up on the shore for frying his food. Arnold Combs, as a boy often went on patrol with his Dad, Abram Combs, and he tells how he was once offered recently cooked food by "Rubber" and how his Dad kicked his shins warning him not to eat.

After his stays at the key house "Rubber" would take off not to be seen 'til the next year, at the Station. He never told anyone where he went but Mr. Charles Helmcke of Rockville Centre, a former surfman, assumed he went to New York City to mend boots for the city firemen and the men on the smacks at Fulton Fish Market.

"Rubber," the surfman thought showed evidence of a good education. He never took any strong liquor but made many annual visits to his good friends at the station. Finally he wrote out the formula for his cement and gave it to the surfmen under the condition they would never reveal it to a manufacturer. The name he signed to the formula was "Charles S. Taft, dated March 12, 1912 at Long Beach. He told the Life Savers that he was a distant cousin to the former President of the United States. No-one knew why he choose this mode of life or where he came from. Finally his visits to the Station ceased and it was presumed that he was dead.

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The Cutlass In The Forest

This story, or old family legend, was related to me by a gentleman now living in Hampton Bays, and who claims that the principal character was his own great-great-grandfather. Because of certain improbable situations which were a part of the tale, I was at first inclined to discard it as one of those weird and impossible stories of which I have heard at least two hundred in the past fifty years. On the other hand, I actually saw and handled the cutlass, bearing the die-stamp of the British Navy, and read what I was assured was the old family account book, showing the receipt of considerable sums of money over a period of exactly one year. The odd thing about these entries was that the source of them was not given, while entries made previously were itemized as for the sale of certain crops, cattle and horses, and in one case for permission to cut timber on the family farm. Entries made after the year of great cash influx were approximately the same; perfectly simple sources of income such as any man with considerable acreage and a well-worked farm might have. It was quite obvious that great-great-grandfather had suddenly come upon considerable wealth and had no intention of divulging the source of it. Taking everything into consideration, I decided that the tale was worth telling.

In early winter of the year 1797, a certain well-to-do farmer who lived in the area now known as Patchogue, and

by Douglas Tuomey

who bore the odd first name of Judah, decided to make the trip across the bay to Fire Island to hunt the raccoons that swarmed in and around the dense forest near the Point of Woods. As a matter of fact, the thick woods are still there, now known as the Sunken Forest.

Out of deference to the unsavory reputation of the beach, and the wide-spread dislike of all South Shore residents for going there alone, the man took with him a nephew who worked for him, a sixteen-year-old boy who was an excellent shot and a tireless hunter of small game.

They made landing during a light snow which dusted the ground, making the hunt easy, as the raccoon with his bushy tail leaves a trail that even an amateur could not fail to exploit. They found firearms unnecessary and used clubs to kill the half-tame animals. As it later developed, this may well have saved their own lives.

By the time daylight began

to fade, the outlook for a continued good hunt the following day, they reached a decision to remain on the island over night, so selecting a sheltered hollow just outside the forest rim, they ate what small amount of food they had brought with them and wrapping their heavy coats around them, they slept.

A few hours after he had fallen asleep, the nephew was awakened by his uncle's hand being clamped tightly over his mouth, and as he came to full consciousness the man pointed toward the dark bulk of the forest, making the sign to listen by touching his ear with his finger-tips. The young man could hear muffled talking by several people deep in the close timber, and see the occasional glint of lanterns.

Both men lay motionless, and after perhaps a half-hour, the talking ceased and was followed by the sharp crackle of twigs, indicating that the party was moving out of the forest and toward the ocean front of the island. Waiting for another thirty minutes,



The Cutlass Marking The Treasure. A line drawing by the author.

the two men carefully cocked their guns, and remaining on all fours, crept silently into the dark edge of the woods.

Cautiously stealing from tree to tree as carefully as Indians, waiting after each move to make sure they were neither seen or heard, the men came to the edge of a circular clearing. Little light from the half-hidden sky helped them, but enough to show the ground criss-crossed with foot-prints. As their eyes adjusted themselves better to the gloom, the older man reached out, and touching the boys' arm, pointed to the far side of the clearing. The hilt of a cutlass which had been thrust into the ground showed its dull brass shape.

Motioning to the boy to follow, the man back-tracked to the wood edge, and skirting it picked up the trail of the departed group. It lead to the water's edge where the marks of a fairly large ship's boat showed in the damp sand of the beach. They could see about a mile off shore, but not beyond, and what was within the range of their vision showed nothing but an

endless row after row of low swells with here and there a light white-cap. Save for the gentle swish of the surf, complete but seemingly ominous silence, prevailed.

Leaving the young man on top of one of the dunes lining the beachfront, the uncle hastened back to the clearing. It was child's play to find the exact spot where the night-visitors had made an excavation, as the several inches of dried pine-needles and other debris had been thoroughly scattered. Using the cutlass, the man found that it struck something unyielding only a few inches below the surface. He was not at all perplexed by the cutlass being there, as common sense told him it was an oversight. Probably driven into the ground when it was exchanged for a shovel, and then in the darkness overlooked when the landing-party left.

Within an hour the man had uncovered what had been buried, and having summoned his nephew back from the beach, they carried the find to their boat.

No one has ever heard exactly what or how much was

in the cache, nor did the man who told the tale know whether it was in coin or gems. Be that as it may, there is no doubt about the fact that great-great-grandfather was a thief; with the saving grace however, that he stole from thieves.

The history of Fire Island is full of strange and often fascinating events, as indeed is all of the South Shore. The years from 1700 to 1850 were crowded with happenings which in these times seem fantastic and unbelievable. The times were rough, and authentic records show that slavery, pirating, wrecking and other skull-duggery were indulged in with the same frequency and profit along these shores as they were in New Orleans and the Jersey Coast. Many a law-abiding and church-going man thought nothing of helping to strip a stranded ship of her cargo

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A True Tale

I thought this letter written by George W. Strong, father of the diarist, in regard to the great depression long ago might be of interest to modern readers. This letter was written to his brother, Thomas S. Strong, at Drown Meadow, L. I.

New York 28th October, 1829

My dear Brother: I scarcely know what to say to you about the \$1000 which you have to loan. Money is at present very plenty here and it is very difficult to effect good, that is safe, loans. You have no conception of the amount of money at loan in this City on mortgage. I have no doubt that more than 3/4ths of this city is at this moment under mortgage. There will be very heavy losses sustained on mortgage loans. In many parts of the city real estate will not command hardly any price at a forced sale and in Brooklyn it is still worse.

The prospect is at present that things will grow worse instead of better in this respect. In the lower part of the City the price of real estate keeps up but in the upper parts of the City it has declined from 25 to 33 per cent. I therefore will not undertake to say but that your money would be as safe if loaned in the country as if loaned here.

The plan which I have adopted where I have had any money paid in and to loan, I have put it in the hands of a broker who is pretty good, who will pay a moderate interest and the principal on demand and let it remain with

by Kate W. Strong

him in this way until I have a good opportunity to loan on mortgages and property in the lower part of the city.

The truth is, a man having money on hand for any length of time which he is anxious to loan is under a strong temptation to let it go at inadequate security rather than lose interest any longer. This is bad policy and often leads to the loss of both principal and interest. I watch the course of events very closely for I have a vital interest at stake.

I can't help feel alarmed at the present prospects. I would prefer that you should not send me any more money. I have as much as I can do to look after my own and I believe your money is as safe in your hands as in mine.

Yours very truly,

George W. Strong

People blamed President Jackson for the depression and the failure of the banks. Someone got out a token known as the Jackson cent. On one side it has the figure of a turtle bearing a bank on its back with the words: "Success to financeering."

On the reverse side it has a donkey at a dead run with the inscription: "I follow in the steps of my illustrious predecessors."

In time the scars of the depression were covered over, and many a 'lame duck' was put back into his business again. As time went on, the question of mails became important. There had been a mail rider years before, which I think was taken care of by private subscription, but now it was a question of the post office department and connections with the



The T. S. Strong Home from a Sketch by Mrs. Carol Davis Petty.

railroad, as is shown by the following letters:

Post Office Department
February 17th 1843

Sir: In reply to the letter of the Hon. S. B. Strong of the 12th inst. I would state that, presuming the days on which he desires the mail to be conveyed by the accommodation stage are not the regular mail days of the contractor from the railroad to Smithtown, the postmaster general consents to said accommodation stage driver taking the mail to Setauket. But he declines, in the present very restricted state of the finances of the department, to give any additional compensation for that service. If the days shall prove to be the regular mail days of the present contractor on the route, the department will have to decline countenancing said stage in any form as it would then amount to an opposition stage to the regular mail line.

Very respectfully yours,
H. A. Hobbie

1st asst. Postmaster Gen.

The next letter looks as though the route was satisfactorily settled.

Post Office Department
April 13, 1843

Sir I would state that the Postmaster General consents to the commencement of route 821, Setauket to Patchogue, at Smithtown 9 miles further, and run thence to Setauket twice a week—to wit, on Thursdays and Saturdays, provided no additional expense to the Department is involved in the arrangement.

Very respectfully, your obt. servt.

H. A. Hobbie Ist. asst. P. M. Genl.

Readers' Forum

First Bridge At Smith Point

As I was driving east on the Montauk Highway the other day I found myself on an unfamiliar stretch of road which has blossomed into the town of Shirley. I was amazed by the changes that have taken place in the past few years and particularly interested in the signs pointing the way to the new Smith's Point bridge.

I recalled using the first bridge many times during the first World War when I drove ambulance loads of wounded soldiers from Camp Upton to Fire Island to spend a day at the beach.

There was an old inn at the end of the bridge and there, the ladies of the Red Cross provided wonderful meals and entertainment for the "boys" before we, of the National League for Women's Service Motor Corps (now defunct) returned them to camp in the evening.

As I recall it storms eventually wrecked the bridge but the bits that remained provided excellent anchorage for very good fishing.

I wonder if any of your readers can recall when this first bridge was built and by whom; when it was actively used and when it was destroyed?

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Smith vs. "Punk's Holers" -Part II

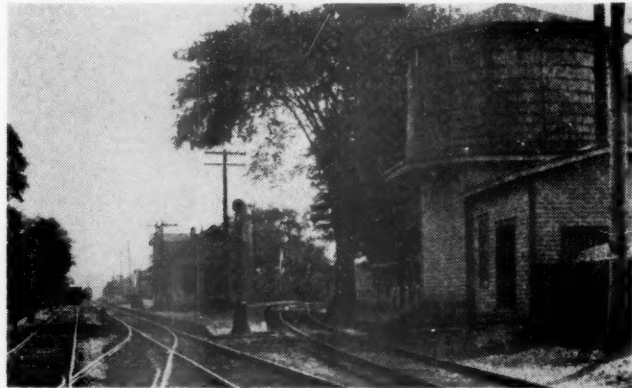
by Chester G. Osborne

(In a preceding article, Judge William Smith (1722-1799) of the Manor of St. George lost a barn and a number of horses in a fire sometime in the 1780's. Fearing further injury and wanting to compensation for his damages, Judge Smith collected and wrote down testimony or depositions from anyone who would talk.)

Judge Smith took "depositions" from Oliver Smith (neither Oliver or the others were immediately related to the "Tangier" Smiths) and Oliver noted a good point: now that the damage was done and allegations made, any other deviltry which might follow would be blamed on the Manorville people, the Punksholers, whether they were guilty or not!

"He saith that he heard Capt. John Havens tell Doxey Lane that he had guessed very right about the burning (of) William Smiths barn. Doxey Lane said that he had never said that they, the Punks Hole people would burn his barn, and that there was now a gap open for other people to do him injury, William Smith, and Lay it to them, the Punks Hole people—that there was other people had as much against William Smith as they. . ."

Hugh Smith then gave evidence: "he saith that he heard Doxey Lane say that it was a chance if William Smith would not have his house and barn burnt over his head if he did not drop his suit that he was carrying on against them; he told him that he understood they, the Punks Hole people, had begun already and burned a stack of



Manorsville Station in Early 1900's.

hay for William Smith. He, Doxey Lane, said that he did not believe they the Punks Hole people had done it and that if any officer came with papers they would have a Bayonet put in their damned paunches and that if they, the Punks Hole people were all of his mind, they would defend themselves by force of arms, that they might as well die one way as another. . ."

A vivid picture of this feud in old Manorsville is given by Annanias Smith (he was not related, either, to Judge Smith), when he went to serve a writ:

"Manr. St. Georgs May 18th 1787 the information of Annanias Smith the information he Gives that when he had Departed to Serve a Writ on Some persons in the place called Punks Hole he was thretened his life by John Turner, his wife, and Some of his family & when he was returning the People Stood in Companies and Said if he Went to Serve a Writt on any of them he was a Dead man—

"And further the 28th of

March last he went to Serve a Notice on Jonah Hulse from William Smith hee said that if he did not take back the Notice and Carry it off with him he would bash (word crossed out) Dash out his brains with a Pounder he then had in his hands."

Annanias talked with Doxey Lane at Stephen Reeve's home in Blue Point, heard the laws variously condemned, and also heard Doxey's son Joseph Lane declare that every man in Punk's Hole had agreed "to take the life of any one that should come to Serve any precept on the people of Punks hole retaking to the title of their land."

"Joseph Rodgers informs me his brother Jesse Rodgers told him (previous two words crossed out) liveing at Speunk told him that Tuthill Daytons Son Said he would Shoot William Smith," another old bit of testimony relates.

Similiar information to the foregoing is given in still another Manor document; it would seem from this that Judge Smith asked several

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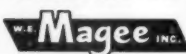
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more folks if they knew anything. This curious phraseology may mean that Henry Ross was a tailor; we are not certain: "information had from R. E. Henry Ross Taylor." Smith mentions a "Clar-esse Ross" as the wife of Henry Ross, and also these people: John Gordon, Gershon Aldridge, Azel Robertson, David Carter, and Clement Erwin.

John Brown heard Tuthil Dayton he "he would destroy William Smith off the face of the earth." Nicholas Ter-ril's name was recorded, but nothing followed. Isaiah Reeve had heard that the Punk's Hole people defend their lands by force of arms, and recalled that "hunters often find the skins of cattle and sheep near Punkhole."

Henry Fanshaw said "he heard some of the afforsaid (Punk's Hole) People say that when William Smith had a stack of hay burned that they wished he had been in it."

Samuel Read said that when a writ was to be read from the "Meeting House" one Sunday, he heard Ishmael Reeve and someone named only "Carter" say that they had another paper to read.

Esther Gilbert said that "she heard Tuthil Dayton say that if William Smith ever got the Land commonly called the Manor or attempted to get it he would watch for him as for a Deer and shute as Quicke as he would a Pig-gion. . ."

We might point out that Judge Smith's total evidence

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in the papers quoted here is at best circumstantial. The possibility that the barn may have ignited through spontaneous combustion is not even mentioned, and may not have been considered, if indeed any of the parties to the feud had ever heard such a phenomenon; and if Judge Smith won his case to his full satisfaction, a memo to that effect has not appeared among his papers.

But we can guess that the feud came to an end in 1793, with a petition put to the Suffolk Court of Common Pleas on March 26. At that time "considerable confusion and dispute arose when some (of the thirty-eight tenants of Manorville) built and settled on the land."

Perhaps the "Punk's Hole people" were now quarreling among themselves. But if they were, they took the sensible way out. Their lands, still held "in common" since the days when they were purchased from Benjamin Youngs in the 1720's, needed to be specifically marked and divided, and five of the tenants so petitioned the court.

The five were Joseph Raynor, Ishmael Reeve, John Horton, David Robinson, Jr., and Joseph Raynor, Jr., and the Court appointed a commission to make a fair partition. The commission was thorough in its work; Judge Smith was among those who "exhibited" titles to their lands, and a report was brought in on October 2, 1793.

Manorville was now ready to grow, with a minimum of growing pains.

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Two Bird Songs and The Insect Chorus

On a muggy July Fourth morning at my home in Wantagh I was serenaded by a robin high up in an old oak tree. His song started at straight-up six o'clock and he signed off twelve minutes later. The song came as a beautiful flute solo filled with accidentals and slight variations on the recurring, repetitious melody. The final cadence held the merest hint of a retard as though the singer had at long last run out of breath.

I should have counted the number of times the simple, little theme was repeated but there is nothing about the beginning of a robin's song to indicate it may be a record breaker in length. The song came in groups of five, six or seven almost identical measures. The groups were separated by double bars having the value of two measures. As I worked at the harmonics and timing of the song on my Hammond organ, I figure the robin must have repeated his short cadences 576 times in the twelve-minute recital.

With the host of harmonics available on the Hammond, I could not reproduce the robin's song. Perhaps the bird had more overtones than I, but more likely he used smaller steps or intervals than the half tones of my instrument.

Surely no other bird is better known on Long Island, or any part of the United States, than the robin. He seems to admire people and to enjoy association with them. His red is instantly recognized and identified and his song marks his nearness although he may be complete-

by Julian Denton Smith

ly out of sight. His faith and trust in the friendliness of man seems a singularly characteristic trait.

While everyone sees and knows the robin there is another bird perhaps equally well known but never seen, and whose song is repeated and repeated, over and over again, until one wonders when the bird must give up in order to breathe. I am thinking of a bird that is around only at night, is not recognized at sight, and speaks only English. The whippoorwill. I should qualify the intent of the preceding sentences. The number of people who have seen a whippoorwill is very, very small—maybe one in a thousand bird watchers, far different from one in a thousand persons. So the bird is not recognized at sight.

I am one of the very few persons to see a whippoorwill. To me it is an ugly looking thing and resembles a bird as much as a sea robin resembles a fish. The whippoorwill I saw seemed mishapened and evil and, had I not heard its call, I should have wondered what in the world the thing might be.

I was awakened one June night by the loud calling of a whippoorwill close at hand. I looked from my bedroom window down on the roof of a greenhouse. The bird huddled on and clutched one of the narrow roof bars not ten feet away. It made no apologies for disturbing the peace and, in fact, seemed to become more vigorous with its callings. I went downstairs, got



Whippoorwill.

my flashlight, and sneaked along inside the greenhouse until I came directly beneath the bird with my head about two feet from him.

He looked like nothing I had ever seen before, squatty, toad-like, bristles around his mouth, and no bill. He called incessantly and his body hunched with the effort. When I had seen all I could in the dim illumination of available light, I snapped on my flashlight. He was up and away but I caught the fiery orange glow of his eyes and the confused, unpatterned mixture of gray, black and brown feathers.

I have found that a flashlight will show the position of a whippoorwill when the bird seems far beyond the strength of the light. The bird's eyes reflect the light and it comes back as a glowing orange spot in the darkness. Try it sometime.

A whippoorwill pronounces more than his name when he calls, but the prefix is unheard at a distance. The extra syllable is "chuck" and the bird actually calls "chuck whippoorwill." Some whippoorwills talk more clearly than others and with careful attention and listening a person may discover a variation within the utterances of a single bird.

One reason so few people see a whippoorwill is probably

Continued on Page 241

Grandma Calista's Prize Hydrangeas In 1844

In the year 1844 the L.I.R.R. was extended from western L. I. to Greenport. Previously it had taken three days via boat or stage. As told to me by my grandmother Calista Horton Haines of Hermitage (Peconic) this first train to Greenport caused great excitement. Notables were to be on the train including George Fiske, president of the Railroad and other prominent guests. My grandmother Calista was all aflutter. She patted her hair, parting it in the middle, with stylish side puffs over the ears. She wanted grandpa Halsey to take her beautiful hydrangeas across the lot and leave them beside the railroad track where those poor city folks could see them and get a whiff of the fragrance. "Pshaw," said Grandpa Halsey. "They're too heavy to lift." "It's got to be done," quoth Grandma Calista.

Now grandpa Halsey was very fond of the seven pies Calista



baked at a time. He knew that if he didn't do as he was bid his pie ration would be small, so he called the hired man with the old box wagon and farm team of horses, took the hydrangeas planted in a half-barrel of heavy soil, good Long Island American dirt, across the five acre lot, to the side of the track.

"Hark, here comes the train!" cried Grandma Calista waving both her hands excitedly—but alas!—the train whizzed by without even a hand waved in reply. No one noticed the beautiful hydrangeas. The train passed by like a strong wind, it was out of sight in the distance before Calista finished waving her hands. All that remained was a thick covering of soot on the beautiful flowers—Grandma Cal-

ista cried. Grandpa Halsey haw-hawed—not too much though. He was thinking of the custard pies of tomorrow.

EVA G. SLATERBECK
Brooklyn

Mighty Pleased

Recently I mailed you a check for one year's subscription—I am mighty pleased as to what I have read in this, my first issue.

AUGUST OLIGER,
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What Restoration Can Do!



Photo by courtesy Nassau County Department of Public Works.



Manhasset's first Schoolhouse is shown at the left after restoration. Above as the school appeared some years ago when after it had been raised to become the upper story of a dwelling.

Readers' Forum

Oldest Frame House

It is always a pleasure to renew our subscription to the Forum and I constantly find myself turning to back numbers to read something again.

Am surprised that no one disputed the statement in your May 1959 issue, p. 98, column 3, that the Peter Wyckoff House (erected 1638), Ralph Avenue, Brooklyn, is the "oldest frame dwelling in America." That honor has long since been claimed by the FAIRBANKS HOUSE in Dedham, Massachusetts.

In 1633 Jonathan Fairbanks landed in Boston with his wife and six children; they seemed to think the new world lacked oak trees, for they brought with them from their native Sowerby in Yorkshire, England, enough timbers for a house, and they stored these in Boston while looking around for the right site. In 1636 they built their house "on the vpland in his grant for an house Lott," in Dedham, which was then known as "Contentment," and a few years later they added a couple of wings. From 1636 until 1902 the homestead was lived in continuously by members of

the same family, and in 1901 the Fairbanks Family Association was formed to take care of needed repairs, etc. There has never been a mortgage or other encumbrance, and the house has never been deeded. Since 1902 the place has been kept as a "museum" and

my cousin, Mrs. Ethel Freeman, lives in a modern house next door and serves as Curator; thousands of tourists sign the guest register annually.

Proof that it is the oldest frame house in America can be found

Continued on Back Page

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THE MANAGEMENT



JUST A LITTLE more than three weeks 'til Christmas! If you haven't bought all your presents for him or for her may we offer a few suggestions.

DOES HE OR she like novels? Well here's one with a Long Island setting but what's more important it is a finely written, provocative book, "Pursuit of the Prodigal" by Louis Auchincloss, published by Houghton, Mifflin Co. of Boston.

The hero, and we use the word in a strictly literary sense, one Reese Parmelee, scion of a decaying baronial family on the North Shore rebels against his feudal ties, leaves a scheming wife and deserts the staid family law firm in a worried search for freedom. Reese, a young man who had everything; physical beauty, social position and still a good chunk of a disappearing fortune just couldn't take it—with him anyway.

As he deliberately cuts his ties with the Best People he is cynically amused (he's really a sort of snob Mr. Auchincloss) to find the hypocrisies he fled in a new guise in the lives of his new associates. He tries cases for Amos Levine in a world of "child custody fights, of bitterly fought divorces, of plagiarisms and libels." He meets and courts, Rosina,

feature editor of "Women's World" whose friends are arty, self important city sophisticates.

If you buy this book for someone, read it first yourself, of course, and find out what happens to Reese and Rosina. The present Master of American Fiction, Mr. J. P. Marquand thinks highly of Mr. Auchincloss' ability and we in our humble way agree. We note that the Parmelees and their particular Smart Set convene at Piping Rock so we can only place Parmelee Cove somewhere between Sea Cliff and Oyster Bay; Brookville maybe?

HOW MANY OF us on the Island are commuters? There must be hundreds of thousands. For those hardy souls who alternately shiver and swelter in the lower regions of the Pennsylvania Station

or ditto Flatbush Avenue Depot, Jerome Beatty Jr. has written a penetrating analysis of the Great Rat Race; Commuting, titled "Show Me The Way To Go Home." The publishers are Thomas Y. Crowell of New York.

Early chapters such as "Oh! What Fun It Is To Ride," and the "Survival Of The Rudest" describe (mostly in a spirit of fun) the change that comes over an ordinarily normal human once he rides the cars twice daily. He is, declares Mr. Beatty, "above all unfriendly." He rattles his paper angrily at the uninitiated who try to start conversations, he takes more than his rightful share of the seat by adroit use of a firm elbow and "if any one of them believes it is wrong to cheat the railroad I have never heard him say so." Using other people's tickets or holding one's thumb over an expired date are, according to the author, favorite ploys. Giving one's seat to a lady is just not done.

Mr. Beatty can be quite serious in his keen analysis of the tax paradox. Governments by law force feather

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bedding and demand improvements (needed no doubt) but once effected are of course, taxed as improvements, but they are reluctant to grant fare increases.

A chapter is devoted to the strange brands of bridge played by commuters; the careful planning of seconds to dress, bolt breakfast and careen to the station are well described. To us the most fascinating section is that devoted to a discussion of the Conductor's Punch; though there be some 10,000 of them they are all different, some proudly designed like that of the teetotaler who used the shape of a cocktail glass for his punch (no pun intended); they are sometimes handed down from father to son and one man was buried with his faithful instrument!

Incidentally the Long Island R. R. gets a pat on the back for its percentage of new coaches and "on time" records but Mr. Beatty is far from being entirely pro-rail-road companies. He questions some of the loss figures presented at hearings, for example.

If your husband commutes, wondering whether he should

commute or has just quit the torture, he'll enjoy and profit by reading this book.

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FOR SALE: "Historical Review," A word and Picture Journey Into Orient's Past, The Historical Society's Formation, Activities and Museum, Price, \$1.10.

"Poems of John Orville Terry, Chiefly Depicting the Scenery, and Illustrating the Manners and Customs of the Ancient and Present Inhabitants of Long Island." (A limited number of copies from the original 1850 printing. George F. Nesbitt, Printer, Wall and Water Streets, New York) Price \$2.00.

Maps: Historical Sites of Orient, Early Families of Oyster ponds (Orient) Price 25c each. (Approx. size 10" by 15".)

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CHRISTMAS GIFTS for man or boy: 'Whale Off!' American Shore Whaling, \$10. 'Ship Ashore!' Long Island shipwrecks, 1640-1955, \$5. 'East Hampton History.' The story of Long Island's easternmost Town, with genealogies. \$10. The East Hampton Star, 153 Main St., East Hampton.

WILL TRADE L. I. books. I have, "The Whale Fishery on L. I.," Sleight, 1931; "Prime Family Records," Prime, 1868; "Brookhaven Town Records": "Up to 1800" and "1798 to 1856"; "Yaphank as it is and Was etc.," Homan, 1875; "Old Lady Number 31," Louise Forsslund (Foster), 1909; "Select Patents of New York Towns," Van Wyck, 1938. Also other L. I. items.

What Have You? Write "Collector" Long Island Forum, P. O. Box 1568, Westhampton Beach, N. Y.

WANTED: 50th. Anniversary edition of the Hampton Chronicle, published June 1957. L. F. Casey, 45 East 85th. Street, New York City.

WANTED: Old postcard scenes of L. I. Write. "Postcards" Long Island Forum, P. O. 1598. Westhampton Beach, L. I.

PERSONAL: We have copy of March 1947 issue of the Forum containing story of "Wreck of Franklin" for Mr. Thomas DeLong but do not have Mr. DeLong's address. P. O. Box 1568, Westhampton Beach.

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Kate Strong's latest booklet of "True Tales" just published by Paul Bailey. Attractively illustrated with line cuts and halftones, the stories are told in her usual light vein. Quotes from old letters, happenings of the 18th and 19th centuries on the Island are brought to life. We like particularly her personal reminiscences of — well, telephone ladies of the early 20th century.

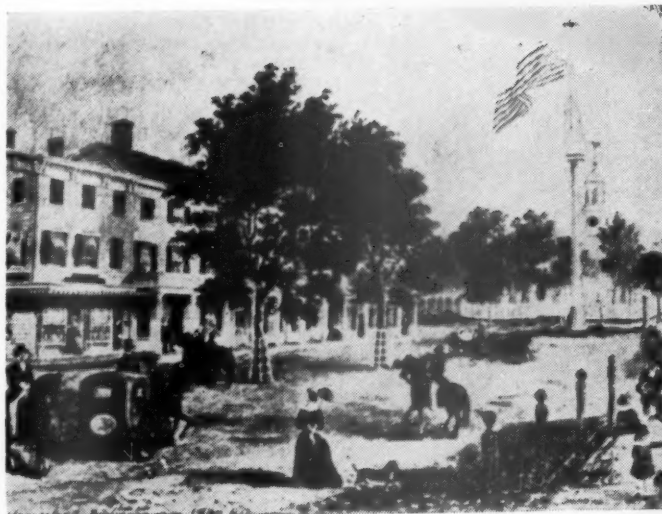
"In the old days the central operators were local people who knew us all. Nowadays they are voices—always courteous but unknown. I certainly miss the old days in this respect but such is progress."

Just to assure you that all is not lost Miss Strong, here's what happened in an East End village last summer. A citizen put in a call for the mayor and the sweet lilting voice of the youthful operator came back over the wire: "Why don't you call later, Mr. Smith, Daddy isn't home now."

For a sample of Miss Strong's work see elsewhere in this issue. For a copy of her booklet write her at the Cedars, Setauket, N. Y.

YOU MIGHT GIVE yourself a treat (in fact four a year) by becoming a member of the Nassau County Historical Society and thus get its "Historical Journal." Our copy; No. 3 of Volume XX, arrived recently containing two scholarly withal entertaining articles; "Peter Cooper and Hempstead" by Semon H. Springer and a reprint of "Incidents In Plandome's History" by the late Dr. William S. Thomas.

Peter Cooper, onetime Presidential candidate on the Greenback ticket, founded



"The Town Spot," Hempstead.

Cooper Union late in life after amassing his great fortune. The makings of his remarkable career began, Mr. Springer tells us, in Hempstead in the early 1800's. There he met, courted and married one Sarah Bedell of ancient Long Island lineage. When two baby boys arrived the ingenious young husband invented the "Pendulous and Musical Cradle" which rocked and sang (?) his children to sleep. The first example no doubt of our present epidemic of "Rock and Roll." (Forgive us, Mr. Springer).

Cooper knew one Matthew Vassar, who then operated "an ale-and-oyster house in the basement of the Poughkeepsie Court House." Matthew, it is thought, later founded the girl's college because of his friend's founding of Cooper Union.

Early Hempstead life, the young folks in their gigs or rigs riding to the clambakes at the ocean and the horse races at Newmarket are well described.

The late Dr. Williams' ar-

ticle on Plandome takes us back to Colonial and Revolutionary days in and around this present day attractive suburb. The days of the Indians on Cow Neck and Mad Man's Neck—some call it Mad Nan's Neck (but this is legend and must be told another time), the deeds to the Nicolls, Latham and Mitchill families are traced. Professor Myron H. Luke of Hofstra College is the capable editor of the "Journal."

We remember the Plandome of not too long ago when Irene and Vernon Castle lived down by the bay; Frances Hodgson Burnett had her "Rackety Packety House" nearby for all the kids to see; Martin Littleton lived there and Fontaine Fox was not too far away; when the peals of an old iron ring brought the volunteer firemen on the run. But that's recent history—as we recall it the present Plandome Golf Club House was a Mitchill home. We'll doubtless hear from Dr. Luke if we're wrong.

The Nassau County Histor-

ical Society offices are at Hofstra College, Hempstead, N. Y.

RIGHT NEXT DOOR, so to speak, to Plandome is the bustling community of Manhasset, not too long ago a sleepy little village but now the proud possessor of the "Miracle Mile" where the good housewives of L. I. spend their husband's money and where you'll find some dandy little traffic jams if you don't watch out.

Despite great changes here there is a strong feeling for the area's history as evidenced by the recent dedication of the "Manhasset Valley School" which, according to a pamphlet prepared by the "Nassau County Department of Public Works," was built in 1808. The pamphlet, a four pager, gives a concise account of the history of the school-house and the picture on the front gives evidence that the restoration was well done. Our copy came from L. E. Andrews, Old County Court House, Mineola.

Edward J. Smits, Assistant Curator of the Nassau County Historical Museum of East Meadow, is the author and has done a fine job. For pictures of the school before and after restoration see page 234.

WE HAVE at hand a copy, by courtesy of Assemblywo-

man Mildred F. Taylor, of the beautifully printed "Report of the Joint Legislative Committee on Preservation and Restoration of Historic Sites." It's a New York State Report of course sent us from Albany. We're going to save discussion of it for next month, we'd like to have time to look into the matter some.

IT'S BEEN GOOD to hear from so many interested readers in the past two months and we hope to hear more in the New Year to come. Meanwhile if you want to give your young ones a treat perhaps you'll take them over to the Suffolk Museum at Stony Brook where a special exhibit of "Toys, Dolls and Mechanical Banks for Young and Old" will remain on display through December 20. When you're filling stockings we could suggest an ideal present which rolled up carefully would fit fine, but modesty forbids. C.J.M.

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Continued from Page 226

before the wreck-master arrived at the scene, and certainly there is no record of any attempt to give it up even after the ownership had been established. There is a definite and amusing record, well authenticated, of the owners of a wrecked vessel walking back and forth through the main street of a certain village, and loudly shouting to the inhabitants that they could keep one half of what they had stolen from her, if they would give up the other half. There is no record of anyone taking advantage of the generous offer.

Thank You!

I enjoy your magazine very much and thoroughly appreciate the spirit that undoubtedly prompts its publication.

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Readers' Forum

Old Orient Stage Coach

When I was a boy my father told me that all other vehicles must give right of way to the mail stage which ran from Orient through East Marion to Greenport (approximately six miles). It was owned and operated by Bert Tabor of Orient, and since he was a good Republican and a veteran of the Civil War, he had no trouble in keeping his job which was considered quite a plum.

In fact several people tried to wrest it from him but to no avail for he was popular and well

liked by the traveling public though he might be a little brusque at times, especially if the train were late or if he had too many errands on his mind.

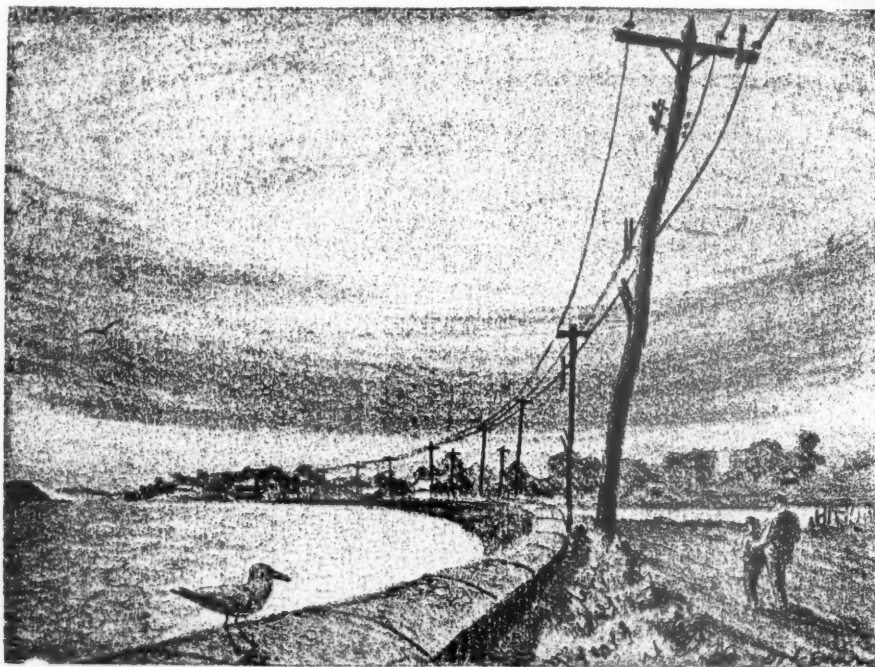
The stage, which was painted black, was drawn by a team of horses and it had a top with curtains all around to keep out the rain and the winter's snow. Seats in it ran crosswise, for about twelve persons and there was a wooden rack strapped on the rear for express parcels, trunks, etc.

The stage left Orient at about 10 a.m. with the mail and passengers; stopped in East Marion at 10:30, picked up the mail then went on to Greenport where it arrived in time to meet the in-

coming train from New York City. Bert then carried the mail bags to the Post Office from the rail road station so it could be sorted over for East Marion and Orient letters. While this was being done he did his shopping for his customers who depended on him for all kinds of errands.

Bert also acted as "Town Crier" on several occasions, shouting as he passed through the villages; the results of Presidential elections and other important events. His biggest new scoop was made on September 6, 1901 when he shouted, "President McKinley assassinated in Buffalo by New York, by Czolgosz!"

I am, or should be anyway, a-



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shamed to admit that on several occasions with my chum I found room on the rear rack for free transportation to a baseball game in Orient. If we were real quiet and didn't try to haul up a third little fellow beside us, all was well. Usually one extra boy was one too many for Bert would stop his horses and come around in back with his horsewhip held threateningly. This meant that his non-paying passengers had to make other transportation arrangements. Since there was but one mail stage we had to walk the balance of the journey on the hot, dusty, dirt road.

Once arrived at the ball lot we bargained, as soon as possible, with the captain of the East Marion team. The idea was to root good and loud for our team if in exchange we could get a ride home in a good old farm wagon. George Tuthill, the pitcher, being a good sport, fell for our scheme.

At one time, as is generally known, the L.I.R.R. planned to

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because the bird flies only at night and most of the time below eye level. It is an insect feeder and insects are more concentrated near the ground than higher up. One naturalist has observed that whippoorwills always fly with their mouths wide open, and that the mouth is opened just before the bird takes off.

One Friday night last May over on Fire Island beach I counted the number of times one whippoorwill sounded forth before he had to stop for breath. I got an easy num-

ber to remember — 123. I thought it was a remarkable number as the bird stopped for nothing the whole time and there was no alteration in the rhythm, tone or diction. Upon reaching home I looked up the count other observers had made and found John Burroughs had recorded 1088. So my bird was not even half trying!

One of our readers was talking to me a few days ago about seasonal night sounds on Long Island. He thought the call of the whippoorwill was certainly the outstanding night sound of late spring and early summer. No one denies that the marsh peepers constitute the night voice of late winter and early spring. But what to do about fall!


I think that we must name the great insect orchestra as the night voice of fall. On Long Island the orchestra pit

extends right from the edge of the water clear back to the highest hills. When the sun goes down on a fall day the insects get out their fiddles and bows, tune up and embark upon a symphony without a repeat the whole season. No two performances alike, always different. One cold, chilly, frosty night will greatly reduce the musicians. After several bad nights only a few players report for work. Finally they, too, are hunted down by old man frost and one, lone, veteran soloist will play a few strained notes, and the concert is done for another year.

Where do the fiddles and the bows come from? What makes all the noise? Why does not something wear out and the concert stop before cold kills off the musicians?

The answer, as so often in nature, is the word "chitin."

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Animals are put together around a skeleton. It is a hard inner frame which supports and carries the load. The whole is encased in skin which is flexible, airtight and moderately waterproof. Insects have no inner skeleton. Instead of a soft skin they have a hard outside covering from which inner parts are suspended and slung. The hard outer covering, the outer skeleton, is made of chitin—a strangely wonderful substance. It makes wings, armor plates for beetles, piercing stingers for mosquitoes, and grasping mandibles for others. It is that part an insect cracks open, steps out of and leaves behind when molting. It is the tough, horny shell that fits down over a horseshoe crab, if we may expand our thought to the sea.

Chitin is so strong, light, indestructible and wearproof that insects can rub chitin part against chitin part all season—millions of times—and no deterioration is evident nor is any lubricate necessary. The rasping of part against part is what makes the tremendous insect orchestra of fall. There is no wearing out of the chitin and the sound ends only when the creature is unable longer to bring chitin part against chitin part—when cold has killed the insect.

Maybe there is another fall night sound on Long Island which does not come to mind for this article. I cannot recall one that takes over when the last of the insect orchestra goes off the air. Can a reader help out?

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extend the rail road from Greenport to Orient. A survey was made, which showed the tracks were to be laid just north of Main Street through East Marion to Orient. However, this idea was soon dropped by the railroad. Why should they go to all this expense for but little revenue and when there was no competition in sight?

The auto has taken the place of the old stage coach which took at least five or six hours for the job which is now done in half the time by the automobile; but the stage coach had its day and it surely was dependable.

CAPT. EUGENE F. GRIFFING
St. Petersburg, Florida

(Editor's Note. Thanks a lot for the story Mr. Griffing, hope we'll get more from you. Last summer we were moseying down to Orient and a fancy convertible whizzed by us. It looked like it would

make the six miles to the New London Ferry in about six minutes!)

Jagger's Boarding House

Enclosed is a check for renewal of the "Forum." Would not be without it. I started my acquaintance with Long Island in the last century. We used to vacation at Mrs. Jagger's boarding house between Westhampton and Speonk. We sailed to the beach, weather permitting in our catboat, "Cigarette" (rented), bathing sometimes at the "Good Place" where women and children clung to the rope in the surf and ate gingersnaps on the beach, and sometimes at the "Bad Place" where there was a bar and where the men would often walk down the beach and bathe "in the buff," as the saying went.

The roads of that day were narrow and sandy with bicycle paths beside them.

Long life to you!

MARGARET C. LYLE

Sayville

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in Holiday Magazine (p. 41, June 1952 issue) and in Vol. 1 of Compton's Encyclopedia, as well as "Historic Homes in America" by Lathrop, and other sources. Fairbanks descendants living on Long Island are Vernon F. Carpenter of Copiague, Mrs. Frederick H. Handsfield of Garden City, the Misses Josephine and Nellie Hewins of Elmhurst, Mrs. Elizabeth Van Wagner of Malverne, Carlisle S. Glezen of Lloyd Neck in Huntington.

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